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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the impact of gender on upward communication (subordinates to superiors) in organizations. It was hypothesized that women would (1) report less self-confidence when approaching a communicative performance situation, (2) rate themselves less successfully following persuasive presentations, and (3) be more likely to attribute their success to external factors and their failures to internal factors than would men. It was also thought that subjects would rate male power figures as making a more positive impression than female power figures, and that men were more likely to advance criterion-based arguments and women to advance arguments of their own creation and based on human relationships and responsibility, to justify decisions. Subjects were 40 male and 40 female college students in public speaking classes. Subjects read a medical case study and two criteria for decision making and were asked to make a decision and present supporting arguments to a professionally dressed male or female "confederate" graduate student in the role of hospital administrator. The confederate then evaluated the arguments, and gave recommendations to the researcher. Subjects completed a questionnaire after their presentations. The results supported the hypotheses, although low self-confidence did not affect performance as rated by the confederates. Men and women also used different criteria in developing their cases, and were often sensitive to the gender of the listener in choosing their arguments. (HTH)

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Patricia Hayes Andrews

Upward-Directed Persuasive Communication and Attribution of Success and Failure

Toward an Understanding of the Role of Gender

Indiana University

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UPWARD-DIRECTED PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION AND ATTRIBUTION OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF GENDER

THE CONTEXT: AN INTRODUCTION

Upward communication in hierarchical settings has long been a subject of scholarly interest and examination. Although the typical context in which upward communication occurs is in an organization, whenever any individual interacts with a powerful other, hierarchical communication can be said to occur. Power can be defined as the ability to control one's own and often others' need satisfaciton.[1] An individual with high power is able either to facilitate or prevent the need satisfaction of those low in power; low power persons, however, are dependent upon highs for their need satisfaction.[2] Individuals communicating upward in a power hierarchy often distort their messages in ways designed to maximize a positive relationship with those in power and to minimize negative information that might reflect negatively on themselves. Thus, Cohen's early explanation of upward communication as being essentially ego-defensive, perceived as instrumental to gaining first rewards and later functional dependence, has received much empirical support.[3]

Zander and others noted, for example, the extent to which messages directed toward highly influential psychiatrists were cautious and supportive.[4] Moreover, Read reported decreased accuracy of messages to superiors in an actual organization when subordinates' upward mobility aspirations were high.[5] This distortion primarily manifested itself in filtering and omission of negative information. Other scholars have identified trust,[6] level of security,[7] and style of leadership,[8] as influencing the nature of upward directed communication. None of these studies, however, has examined the impact of gender on upward communication. This is a troubling oversight, given the fact that gender has been demonstrated to be a variable influencing leadership emergence, self-disclosure, task orientation, bargaining strategies, and a wide variety of other organizational communication processes and outcomes.[9]

Thus, a major purpose of this investigation is to examine the impact of gender on upward communication, considering both the gender of the power figure and that of the subordinate. Because the act of communicating upward in a power hierarchy is often viewed as important and anxiety provoking, the study also seeks to compare the self-expectations and evaluations of subordinates before and after their communicative exchange.

ATTRIBUTION OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Whether or not individuals develop positive self-expectations will depend in part upon whether they perceive themselves to be succeeding or failing. Equally important, however, is how they explain their successes and failures. Heider's attribution theory argues that individuals are motivated to search for the underlying causes of events that occur around them.[10] Thus, in the case of a job-related success, for example, the individual will strive to understand and explain the cause of that success. Heider's theory posits two primary kinds of attribution, internal and external. Internal attributions rely on the characteristics of the actor, e.g., "I was promoted because of my sales ability." External attributions, in contrast, point to characteristics of the environment or task, e.g., "The boss liked me," or "The job was easy." An individual's choice of an explanation will be influenced by his or her prior self-beliefs. If, for example, an employee believes that he is very good with numbers and is subsequently promoted for his exceptionally fine cost analysis, he is likely to attribute his success to his own intellignece or ability. An employee with a negative self-expectation is more likely to attribute his unanticipated success to an easy job, a kindly supervisor, or poor performance by his competitors. Contrastingly, attributions of failure are the opposite. Those with positive self-expectations typically attribute their failure to external causes (e.g., hard luck); those with negative self-expectations

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internally attribute their failure (e.g., stupidity).

Several studies have confirmed the fact that men and women attribute their success and failure differently. Men, in general, attribute their success to themselves and their failure to external causes. Women, in contrast, attribute their failure to themselves and their success to circumstance.[11] Henning and Jardim's classic study of women in management confirmed this generalization.[12] In addition, men and women judge other males and females much as they do themselves. Feather and Simon found, for instance, that subjects attributed the success of a female postgraduate student to luck, easy courses, and cheating. They explained the identically described success of a male student as great ability[13] Comparable studies by Deaux and Emswiller[14] and by Feldman-Summers and Kiesler[15] obtained similar results.

Together, the processes of attributing success and failure have a significant impact on the confidence with which individuals approach performance tasks. Those individuals who consistently attribute their successes to external factors and their failures to themselves are not as likely to feel optimistic about their future performance as those who have taken credit for their successes and perhaps attributed their failures to external causes. Whether the individual's attribution processes are "accurate" or not is beside the point. Far more crucial is the effect of such judgments on performance expectations and subsequent behavior.

A number of past studies have demonstrated the impact of negative self-expectations on performance. Both Battle[16] and Feather[17] have reported that subjects approaching tasks with a low expectancy are less likely to perform well than those with a high expectancy. This finding is not due simply to the fact that those with greater ability have higher expectancies, for Diggory and Tyler found similar results when they manipulated subjects' expectancies

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experimentally.[18] Besides diminishing performance, low expectancies may also adversely affect an individual's initiative. That is, studies by Lenney[19] and Wiemer[20] suggest that individuals who anticipate performing poorly tend to choose not to engage in achievement activities, to select less demanding tasks, and to be more readily discouraged when confronted with failure.

Since the relationship between the attribution of success and failure processes has such a pronounced impact on self-confidence, we might expect men to have greater self-confidence in approaching performance situations than women. Numerous studies conducted over the past 25 years have supported this conclusion. These studies have focused on a diversified population, including elementary school children, college students, and young adults.[21] In general, these studies reveal that men are more likely than women to expect to achieve, to judge their own performance more favorably, and to predict that their future performance will be at least as good and possibly better.

As the review of previous literature suggests, a substantial amount of research has been conducted addressing the issues of success and failure attribution, gender, and self-confidence; yet, no study has examined these phenomena in a communicative context.[21] Subjects in research focusing on attribution of success/failure have been asked to do such things as play games at a county fair, take paper-and-pencil tests, throw balls at a target, and imagine themselves in future occupations.[22] The only study relating performance-self-esteem to a communication context was based on perceptual data rather than observed communication performance.[23] Moreover, most of the research examining gender differences in attribution processes is dated, most by at least ten years. Yet, the past decade has witnessed numerous attempts by women's groups and organizations to raise the consciousness, self-esteem, and assertiveness of women, especially professional women. Thus, a contemporary examination of these phenomena is warranted. Of particular interest is the

extent to which these phenomena are evident in hierarchical settings. Such settings provide a context in which performance (and particularly communication performance) is often required and where self- and other-evaluation is the norm.

Beyond its general focus on upward communication, this investigation's specific focus is upon subordinate-initiated communication that has a persuasive intent. In organizational settings persuasive attempts abound. Subordinates often find themselves in the position of having to convince their superiors that their ideas, plans, or proposals are good ones, ones that merit endorsement and possibly reward. How does one argue effectively in that kind of situation? Do men and women approach argument differently? And does the gender of the superior make a difference in the way one presents his or her case? Although much past research has compared the perceived and actual communicative behavior of men and women, none has examined the way that males and females present their arguments to those of either gender in a hierarchical communication context.

Organizations represent communication environments in which rules, procedures, and regulations are common. Several writers have suggested that men are more likely than women to "play by the rules".[24] Such practices can serve to simplify decision making involving questions of value where problems of ethical consequence are often involved. If a rules-based perspective is adopted, the decision maker is safe so long as he or she stays within the "law". For others, however, such a legalistic perspective may seem simplistic--and other more complex criteria pursued that involve social, philosophical or even religious considerations.[25] Gilligan has argued, for example, that women are less likely than men to make decisions based on rules; rather, she asserts that women are likely to focus on how people and their relationships

will be affected by the decisional outcome.[26] Since this investigation asks subjects to make a decision of a partially ethical nature, it provides an ideal context for comparing the types of arguments that men and women use to justify their decisions to others.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of literature and the reasoning presented so far, the following hypotheses were advanced:

1. Women will report less self-confidence than men in approaching a communicative performance situation.
2. Following persuasive presentations, women will rate themselves as having performed less successfully than will men.
3. Women are more likely than men to attribute their success to external factors and their failure to internal factors.
4. Subjects will rate male power figures as having made a more positive impression than female power figures.
5. The kinds of arguments advanced by men and women are likely to differ. Specifically, men are more likely than women to advance criterion-based arguments and women to advance arguments of their own creation, especially those based on human relationships and responsibility.

METHOD

Procedures: Subjects

Subjects (N=80; half males, half females) were recruited from basic public speaking classes at a large midwestern university. Most were first and second year college students. Each received credit in his or her class for participating in the experiment. Subjects were asked to fill out a preliminary questionnaire indicating their willingness to participate and times of availability. The investigator called the subjects individually to arrange the time

and place for the experiment.

When each subject arrived at the investigator's office on the day of the study, he or she was taken to an adjoining room and presented with a copy of the "Kidney Machine Decision" case.[27] The subject was then instructed to read the case and left alone for a short while. The case asks the subject to choose one of five prospective candidates to receive the medical assistance of a life-preserving kidney machine. Each candidate needs to use the machine to live, but due to extremely limited hospital facilities, only one can be chosen. The case continues:

> Your job is to study the information provided about the five current medically-approved applicants and then select the one you would like to see benefit from the kidney machine. As you go about the process of selecting the candidate of your choice, you will undoubtedly have reasons for making the choice you do.
>
> After you have made your choice, you will be taken to another room in the Speech Communication Department where you will be introduced to a graduate student and inform her of your decision, give her the reasons you have made the choice that you have, and try to convince her that your choice is a good one. You can assume that she is familiar with the case and the biographical sketches.

Then the subject is presented with two criteria for guiding his or her decision, age and emotionality stability, and told that the subject is not to consider wealth or income in making his or her choice. Then the instructions continue:

> If you wish, you may take notes with you. The procedure we are using here is similar to that used in Memorial since each decision maker studies the information individually and then meets with the chief hospital administrator to present his choice and accompanying reasons. Since this is a simulation, however, we are using a graduate student in place of an actual administrator.
>
> The graduate student's job is to listen carefully to your case for the candidate of your choice and decide how effectively you have presented your arguments. If you present a convincing case, you could make some money.

> Specifically, when you meet the graduate student, you will see that she has $10.00. If she decides that you have done an outstanding job of presenting your case, she will give you the $10.00. If she thinks you have done a very good job, then she will give you $8.00 and so on. An average case is worth $5.00. Only if your case is without merit will you receive no money at all.

Depending upon the experimental condition, the gender reference to the confederate was altered from "her" to "him". The investigator also obtained permission to tape the experimental session and told the subject that the graduate student would give him or her neither positive nor negative feedback during the presentaion.

Each subject was then given as long as he or she desired to study the patients' personal profiles and prepare arguments. When the subject told the investigator that he or she was ready, the investigator ushered him or her to the experimental room where the confederate's role became prominent and is explained in the section that follows.

Confederates

Confederates used in this investigation were graduate students in the Department of Speech Communication at Indiana University. To increase the generalizability of the study's results the investigator trained and used eight confederates (four males and four females). Before the actual experiment began each confederate was asked to read the case, "The Kidney Machine Decision." Then they met with the investigator who explained the role they were to play. Each confederate was instructed to dress professionally. After questions were raised and addressed, confederates participated in one practice/training session. These sessions were videotaped, played back, and discussed.

During the experiment, each confederate sat at the head of a rectangular table placed in a conference room (the small group laboratory).

He or she waited for the subject to arrive with $10.00 in cash prominently displayed on the table. When the subject arrived, the confederate rose and greeted him or her with a "hello" and a handshake and said, "As Dr. _____ told you, I have read the case, so you can assume that I am familiar with it. I'll be listening to your arguments and taking a few notes as you go, but I won't interrupt you or make any comments. (Pause) Why don't we begin?"

The subject was seated at the side of the rectangular table rather than at the opposite end to reinforce nonverbally the power of the confederate. During the confederate's brief remarks, the investigator excused herself and went into an adjoining room to turn on the video recorder. At a signal from the investigator, the subject began presenting arguments for his/her chosen patient.

Throughout each session, the confederate appeared neutral, providing the subject with neither encouragement nor discouragement. About every 30 seconds he or she wrote on a legal pad, thus suggesting that he/she was taking notes in order to make a careful decision. As soon as the subject finished presenting arguments, the confederate thanked him or her and left the room, saying," Dr. _____ will return in a moment and tell you how much of this money you get as soon as I've totalled your points."

Then the confederate met with the investigator, filled out a short form evaluating the subject's performance and suggested the amount of money the subject deserved to receive.[28] The investigator returned to the experimental room, asked the subject to complete a post-session questionnaire, and presented him/her with the "earned" money. The confederate had no further contact with the subject.

Independent Variables

This investigation employed two independent variables, gender of the subject (40 females and 40 males) and gender of the power figure (four females

and four males). Each of the subjects was paired with a confederate such that 20 of the dyads were composed of a male subject talking to a female confederate; 20 with a male subject talking to a male confederate; 20 with a female subject talking to a male confederate; and 20 with a female subject talking to a female confederate. Within these dyads, subjects were randomly assigned to different confederates.

Dependent Variables

One focus of this investigation was the extent to which the subject and confederate gender variables influenced subjects' self-reported confidence as they approached their communicative task. Thus, after the subjects had been presented with the decision-making task and given time to prepare their cases, they were also asked to respond to a pre-session questionnaire which asked them to rate the extent to which they felt confident that they would be able to present their arguments effectively.

Beyond pre-performance expectations, once the communicative performance is finished, it is equally important to discover how individuals perceive the success of their presentations after the fact. Subjects in this study were asked to rate the extent to which they believed they had successfully presented their cases. This question appeared on a post-session response form which also asked subjects to indicate the extent to which they attributed either their success of their failure to each of four factors: effort or ability (representing internal attribution factors) and the nature of the task or luck (external attribution factors). The post-session questionnaire also asked subjects to record their perceptions of the confederate. That is, each subject rated the power figure with whom he or she communicated on a seven-point bipolar scale indicating the extent to which he or she had

created either a positive or a negative impression.

Besides examining subjects' perceptions of their own success, this investigation also sought to examine "audience" perceptions of the speakers' success. Since the audience in this case was simply the confederate, the investigator asked each confederate to rate each subject on a seven-point bipolar scale at the conclusion of the communicative session, reacting to the extent to which the subject in question had presented a good case. These ratings, in turn, were used as a basis for determining the amount of reward each subject would receive (for example, a rating of 7 resulted in a $10.00 reward, a 6 in a $8.50 reward and so on). Although the confederates were aware of the gender of the individuals they were rating, they were not informed until the experiment had concluded that gender was a variable of interest in this study.

The final set of dependent variables focused on the quality or type of arguments advanced by the subjects. Five graduate students in the Department of Speech Communication at Indiana University examined transcripts of the subjects' arguments. The arguments were placed in random order. Judges knew neither the gender of the subject advancing a particular argument nor the condition in which the argument was advanced. They were, however, given a copy of the "Kidney Machine Decison" case and asked to pay particular attention to the decisional criteria. Then each judge was given a list of the arguments (246 in all) and asked to rate them on each of the following questions:

1. To what extent does this argument refer to one of the criteria presented in the case? (referring here to age, wealth, or emotional stability)
2. To what extent does the argument focus on the patient's responsibility to others in his/her family?

3. To what extent does the argument focus on the patient's potential contribution to society, the community, or to humankind?

All of the arguments were rated on seven-point bipolar scales. Since each argument was rated on each of the scales, the judges were encouraged to consider it from a multidimensional point of view. An argument, for example, could refer to emotional stability and the patient's responsibility to others.

The judges' ratings were combined and checked for reliability. Table 1 presents the reliability coefficients for each of the variables based on the judges' summated ratings.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Since these reliabilities were quite high, the investigator submitted the data to several analyses of variance, findings of which are reported in the results section.

RESULTS

This study's design was a 2^2 factorial with each cell of the design composed of the response measures of twenty subjects. The data were submitted to analyses of variance. Whenever a significant interaction was discovered, the Newman-Keuls procedure was used to determine the exact nature of the differences.[29] Tables 2 depict the cell means for those "analyses" showing significant interaction.

Confidence in Approaching the Task

The first dependent variable measured the extent to which the subjects expressed self-confidence in approaching their task. As Table 2 demonstrates, findings revealed significant interaction between confederate gender and

subject gender ($F = 11.45$; $df = 3,79$; $p = .004$). First, the Newman-Keuls procedure revealed that male subjects were more confident as they anticipated presenting arguments before a male confederate ($\bar{x} = 3.1$) than before a female confederate ($\bar{x} = 4.5$; $p < .01$). Moreover, female subjects expressed more confidence in approaching a female confederate ($\bar{x} = 3.9$) than a male confederate ($\bar{x} = 5.3$; $p < .01$). Finally, women were significantly less confident ($\bar{x} = 5.3$) than men ($\bar{x} = 3.1$) in arguing before a male confederate ($p < .01$). (It should be noted that low scores on this variable indicate high self-confidence). In general, women were less confident than men as they approached their persuasive presentations.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Perceived Success

Subjects' ratings of the extent to which they were successful in arguing persuasively, the second dependent variable, revealed one main effect ($F = 6.94$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .016$). That is, men perceived themselves as having argued more successfully ($\bar{x} = 5.3$) than females ($\bar{x} = 3.6$), regardless of confederate gender.

Actual Success

The next dependent variable examined the extent to which the confederates perceived the subjects as having argued persuasively. Interestingly, confederates rated males ($\bar{x} = 4.8$) and females ($\bar{x} = 5.1$) as having performed equally successfully ($F = .52$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .492$).

Attribution of Success/Failure

Besides the analyses reported above, subjects were also asked to reflect upon the extent to which they attributed either their perceived success or failure to internal or external variables.

First, in terms of attributions of success, a main effect emerged for the extent to which subjects attributed their success to hard work ($F = 10.85$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .006$). Specifically, women attributed their success to hard work ($\bar{x} = 6.1$) to a significantly greater extent than did men ($\bar{x} = 4.0$). Another main effect was discovered for the second success attribution variable, ability ($F = 18.3$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .001$). In this instance, men attributed their success to natural communication ability ($\bar{x} = 6.3$) to a significantly greater extent than did women ($\bar{x} = 3.8$). The third success attribution variable, luck, revealed no significant difference ($F = .836$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .264$). For both genders the extent to which their success was attributed to luck was minimal ($\bar{x} = 1.5$ for men; $\bar{x} = 2.0$ for women). The final success attribution measure, the ease of the task, also revealed no main nor interaction effect ($F = .236$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .689$). Again, the mean scores for both sexes were quite low (female $\bar{x} = 1.1$; male $\bar{x} = 1.7$).

Lastly, those measures pertaining to attributions of failure also revealed several main effects. First, men ($\bar{x} = 4.8$) were significantly more likely than women ($\bar{x} = 3.2$) to attribute their failure to their lack of effort ($F = 4.63$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .031$). The next main effect related to subjects' perceived lack of communication ability. Specifically, women ($\bar{x} = 6.1$) were more likely than men ($\bar{x} = 3.5$) to attribute their failure to their own lack of communication ability ($F = 18.9$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .001$). For the third failure attribution measure, the difficulty of the task, another main effect revealed that men were more likely ($\bar{x} = 5.7$) than women ($\bar{x} = 4.8$) to attribute their failure to task difficulty ($F = 8.63$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .009$). Finally, neither men ($\bar{x} = 1.8$) nor women ($\bar{x} = 1.4$) attributed their failure to being unlucky ($F = .164$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .864$).

Perceptions of Authority Figure

Subjects' ratings of the confederates in terms of whether or not they had formed a positive or a negative impression revealed one main effect ($F = 5.87$; $df = 1,79$; $p = .024$) with female confederates receiving lower ratings ($\bar{x} = 4.5$) than males ($\bar{x} = 2.9$; $p < .05$), regardless of subject gender. (Here too low scores signify a positive impression).

Argument Quality/Type

Criteria Reference

Judges' ratings of the extent to which subjects' arguments referred to one of the criteria presented in the case revealed one main effect for subject gender ($F = 9.88$; $df = 1,245$; $p = .008$). Specifically, arguments advanced by males were rated as significantly more criterion-based ($\bar{x} = 5.1$) than those advanced by females ($\bar{x} = 3.6$).

References to Patient's Family Responsibility

Judges' ratings also revealed a main effect for the subjects' gender variable on the next dependent measure, the extent to which arguments focused on the patient's responsibility to his or her family members ($F = 7.43$; $df = 1,245$; $p = .017$). In particular, female subjects' arguments were rated as having referred to the patient's family obligations to a greater extent ($\bar{x} = 6.6$) than those of the male subjects ($\bar{x} = 5.1$).

Reference to Patient's Social Contribution

The third judge-rated dependent variable measured the extent to which subjects' arguments were perceived as making reference to the patient's potential social or community contribution. As Table 3 demonstrates, these data revealed several significant interactions between confederate gender and subject gender ($F = 5.98$; $df = 1,245$; $p = .021$). First, female subjects

were more likely to use social contribution arguments when addressing a female confederate ($\bar{x}$ = 5.3) than when addressing a male ($\bar{x}$ = 4.0; p .04). In addition, when addressing a male confederate, female subjects used arguments that were rated as being significantly more focused on social contributions ($\bar{x}$ = 4.0) than did male subjects ($\bar{x}$ = 2.7; p .05). Finally, male subjects were more likely to use a social contribution argument in addressing a female confederate ($\bar{x}$ = 4.6) than in addressing a male confederate ($\bar{x}$ = 2.7; p .01).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

Although past research has demonstrated that men are more likely than women to approach their tasks with confidence, this study examined individuals' self-confidence in a specific communicative context involving upward communication. Results largely reinforced findings from other studies; that is, women reported feeling less confident than their male counterparts about their ability to communicate their cases persuasively. It is important, however, to view these findings in light of the confederates' ratings of the subjects' communicative efforts. Specifically, these confederates, speech communication graduate students who had studied both persuasion and argumentation, perceived that both males and females performed equally well. We might conclude, then, that at least in this particular situation, negative self expectations did not impair performance. This may be, in part, because the women were not so much negative about their self-expectations as they were uncertain.[30]

Another important aspect of the self-confidence findings relates to one of the interactions. Although men in general were more confident than women in approaching their persuasive task, their confidence was significantly greater when they anticipated dealing with a male "superior" than when dealing with a female. Perhaps due to the relatively small number of women in supervisory positons, young men may not feel as comfortable about the prospect of dealing with them effectively as they do with males of high rank. The fact that the men in this study also used different kinds of arguments in addressing men and women provides further evidence that they apparently viewed their "audiences" as different, requiring different kinds of appeals. In general, the results suggest that women feel more confident in addressing their upward communication to a woman than to a man. Even if it is more likely that women

have had and perhaps will have more experience working for men than women, their self-assessed prospects of success are, nonetheless, greater when anticipating presenting their arguments to someone of the same gender.

Not only did men and women in this study approach their communicative encounters differently in terms of expressed self-confidence, they also rated themselves differently after they had presented their cases. Regardless of confederate gender, the men rated themselves as having communicated more effectively than the women rated themselves. The fact that the confederates rated both sexes as having performed equally well suggests the presence of perceptual distortion for both men and women. Moreover, the fact that confederates' ratings were lower($\bar{x}$ = 4.8) than the men's self-ratings ($\bar{x}$ = 5.3) and higher ($\bar{x}$ = 5.1) than the women's ($\bar{x}$ = 3.6) supports the frequently reported finding of past research that men tend to overestimate their success and women to underestimate theirs.

Beyond discovering whether or not an individual views his or her peformance as successful, it is also important to understand to what that person attributes that perceived success or failure. Findings of the present investigation differed, in part, from those of past research in that women were willing to attribute their success to their own effort or "hard work".[31] In fact, women were more likely than men to identify their hard work as a significant factor leading to their success. The experimental context may have contributed to this finding in that the subjects were given a block of time for the specific purpose of working on their cases. The immediacy of this preparation period may have highlighted effort or careful preparation as a likely contributor to success. In actual organizations where a successful manager may be asked to reflect on the reasons for his or her success over time, other factors, such as luck, good timing, or the charm of one's personality may come to mind as playing a more prominent role.

Although women were able to acknowledge their effort as a contributor to their success, they were, nevertheless, unable to acknowledge their ability. Men, in contrast, readily pointed to their "natural communication ability" as having determined their success. The difference between men and women on this variable was especially striking. Clearly, not all internal attribution processes are the same. It is one thing to recognize success as a function of one's effort, implying that success may continue as long as one is willing to work at it. It is quite another to believe that one's success has resulted from natural talent and thus might come about with or without effort. This difference in the internal attribution processes of the men and women in this investigation was further reinforced by the amount of time they spent preparing their presentations. The average preparation time for women was 22 minutes; for men, it was 15. Moreover, the preparation time range for women was 16 to 38 minutes; for men, it was 5 to 26.

Neither men nor women in this study were inclined to externally attribute their success to luck, although women did acknowledge luck significantly more than did their male counterparts. Even so, the means for both sexes were quite low. Similarly, neither sex attributed their self- assessed failure to hard luck. Moreover, subjects did not attribute their success to the other external factor, an easy task. Both of these findings may have been influenced by the nature of the experimental task and situation. First, the task was difficult in the sense that it involved ethics and demanded that the subjects make tough choices. In addition, since the subjects did not know the confederates and since the connection between their preparation time, their presentations and their rewards was so obvious, the likelihood that luck might have intervened seemed remote. As mentioned above, more typical organizational experiences may be more likely to call forth possible explana-

tions of luck and chance. It should not be forgotten, however, that other experiments involving situations comparable to the one in which these subjects participated did find women pointing to luck in attributing their success, in spite of the rational unlikelihood of that kind of contingency.[32] Thus, even given the constraints of this experimental environment, results of this study depart from those of earlier investigations regarding external attribution for women.

Apart from luck playing little role in the way that men and women attributed their failure in this study, the other attribution factors all revealed interesting differences between the sexes. First, men were far more likely than women to point to their lack of effort as having contributed to their failure. This finding suggests that men were willing to "take responsibility" for their failure in a way that previous research has rarely reported.[33] They were not nearly so inclined, however, to acknowledge lack of communication ability as a significant contributor to their poor performance. Thus, even though these men did partly internally attribute their failure, they attributed it to something over which they have substantial control, their effort. Women, in contrast, internally attributed their self-assessed failure to their lack of communication ability. In the absence of ability, increased effort may be in vain. Thus, in contrast to men, women explained their failure as being caused by something over which they have limited control.

Finally, men were far more likely than women to externally attribute their failure to the difficulty of the task. It is important to recognize here that both sexes recognized the task as being difficult, for when the pre-session questionnaire asked subjects to rate their initial perceptions of the task, both men and women rated the task as being difficult and complex (male $\bar{x} = 4.2$; female $\bar{x} = 4.0$). In spite of this perceived difficulty, however, when later

asked to explain their lack of success, men called forth task difficulty as an explanation for their failure to a significantly greater extent than did women. This finding supports past research findings, suggesting that men are more likely than women to point to factors in their environment when explaining their poor performance. While recognizing the complexity of the task, women simply refused to point to it as a possible contributor to their communicative problems. Although it is not possible to suggest which attribution tendency is most valid, it seems likely that the task played some role in influencing subjects' performance, but perhaps not as significant a role as the male assessment might suggest.

Apart from subjects' perceptions of the task and their own performance, their reactions to the confederates were also of interest in this investigation. Past research has suggested that men are more likely to be positively perceived in authroity roles than women, in part, because of stereotypic views of leadership/management/power positions as being most appropriately occupied by men.[34] Results of this study reinforced previous findings; that is, both males and females rated the male confederates as having created a more positive impression than the female confederates. It is unlikely that such differences could be attributed to differences in the way the confederates enacted their parts, since each was carefully coached and asked to perform in a standard manner. The investigator's subsequent review of the sessions' tapes revealed that confederates performed according to instructions. Thus, differences in the way they were rated were likely based on subjects' reactions to men and women playing a role which asked them to listen to the subjects, evaluate them and give to or withold from them a monetary reward. Since so many managers in actual organizations perform precisely these behaviors, the findings of this investigation suggest that women who

assume management responsibilities may not yet be viewed as positively as men.

Lastly, this study examined the type of arguments advanced by the subjects. Judges ratings revealed some striking differences on these communicative variables. First, men were far more likely than women to advance arguments that were based on criteria presented in the case as guidelines for decision making. Thus, men were more likely than women to base their case for their chosen patient on age and emotional stability and to ignore wealth as a factor. Interestingly, not only did women make fewer direct references to these criteria, but in several cases the criteria were mentioned only so that the subject might take exception to them. For instance, one female subject commented, "I know that wealth is not supposed to be taken into consideration, but I chose Charles partly because he had so much money that he was using to help people in the community. I mean, I'm not using wealth like he's buying his way onto the machine, but he is using his money for others. He's using it constructively, and I'm really impressed by the fact that he is going to do that whether or not he gets to go onto the machine." Several other women expressed similar sentiments. Not a single man mentioned, this, however.

One can interpret these findings in many different ways. It might be argued, for instance, that if an individual is asked to make a decision according to certain rules or using certain procedures and those procedures are ignored, the decision reached is not likely to be a good one. Such abandonment of the rules could have practical, legal, or even ethical implications. On the other hand, it could be argued, that complex decision making often requires one to forsake rules and procedures--or, at the very least, to question them if they seem to be standing in the way of a sound, equitable,

or humane decision. The women who deviated from the criteria in this study appeared to be doing so for some of these reasons. Whether women would ignore criteria or rules in more routime or clear-cut situations seems unlikely, given the fact that most women who chose to take exception to some criterion did so by mentioning the criterion and then justifying her exception, usually suggesting that although the criteria were reasonable, they might be too simple or not take into consideration other criteria that one should be using in this kind of situation, like the benefit of others. Clearly, this is a complex subject in need of further investigation.

Although women were not as likely as men to use criteria provided by the case, they did use criteria of their own creation, focusing especially on the patient's responsibility to his or her family. Women focused on this theme of maintaining family relationships to a significantly greater extent than did men. Moreover, the way they discussed these obligations also differed. In short, women explained their arguments more fully and with seeming greater conviction than did men. One man said, for instance, "And then, of course, you've got to consider the man's family. I mean, he has four kids who need him." Contrast this with a female who chose the same patient, "Well, I chose Jame B. mainly because of his family, his kids, and the fact that they need him. I mean, he's got lots of (I guess four) kids. And one of them--the youngest--is retarded. How would his wife support those kids? She doesn't have a job. And besides, I know they aren't getting along very well, but they are sticking together for the sake of the kids--and that shows that they are good parents and they care about their kids." Again, these findings are difficult to interpret. In a sense, being concerned about people and their relationships is a stereotypic female trait. Men, in contrast, are supposed to be more task-oriented and rational. However, in this case the decision was one that implicitly called for some consideration

of relationships. Further research clarifying the kinds of procedures and criteria most likely to lead to a good quality decision is needed before judgments can be made about the relative wisdom of introducing these kinds of criteria. On the basis of this study, it is clear that women, for better or worse, are more likely than men to introduce arguments based on the individual's personal obligations to significant others. As Gilligan has pointed out, ". . . women try to change the rules in order to preserve relationships. . . "[35]

The final argument quality variable examined the extent to which subjects referred to the patient's contribution to society or the community. In general, women's arguments focused on social contributions to a greater extent than did men's, but the gender of the confederate in this instance played a significant role. That is, male subjects used arguments that were more oriented toward social contributions when they were addressing a woman than a man. Moreover, women's arguments directed toward women were more likely to focus on social contributions than those directed toward men. Men, however, made a more pronounced distinction between a male and a female audience. It seems that subjects thought that women would be more interested in or devoted to community/societal concerns than men. That is, the subjects must have assumed they were more likely to be rewarded if they used such arguments with females. This suggests certain gender-based assumptions that both men and women make as they approach audiences of different genders. Perhaps both believe that women are more open to arguments based on criteria other than those presented as part of the "rules". Or they may believe that women are more concerned about the welfare of the community than are men. It is not possible to determine on the basis of these data which interpretation is most appropriate. Nor is it possible to assess whether

or not the subjects were correct in their decision to use different strategies with men than with women. The confederates rated the subjects as having argued equally successfully. This might mean that the strategies chosen were appropriate. Or it could mean that the confederates perceived community and family responsibility arguments as being appropriate when advanced by a female and criteria-based arguments as appropriate when forwarded by a male. Since the confederates were aware of the gender of the subjects they were rating, either explanation is viable.

Summary

As professional men and women attempt to function effectively in varied organizational settings, they are often called upon to present their ideas and suggestions to those above them in the organizational hierarchy. The confidence with which they approach such communicative encounters, their self-assessments after these encounters, and their explanations of their own success or failure are potentially important determinants of how well they perform and the extent to which they develop positive self-esteem as they face future performances. This investigation demonstrates that gender plays a significant role in mediating expressed self-confidence, self-evaluation, and attributions of success and failure. It further suggests that men and women use different kinds of criteria in developing their cases and are often sensitive to the gender of the listener in choosing their arguments. It remains for future studies to explore the reasons for these differences and the relative efficacy and appropriateness of using different argumentative techniques in varied communicative contexts.

TABLE 1

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS OF THE COMBINED JUDGES' RATINGS FOR EACH OF THE ARGUMENT QUALITY VARIABLES

Variable	Reliability Coefficient
Criteria Reference	.98
Family Responsibility	.96
Social Contribution	.97

Since these reliabilities were quite high, the investigator submitted the data to three additional analyses of variance, findings of which are reported in the results section.

TABLE 2

CELL MEANS FOR SUBJECTS' SELF-CONFIDENCE IN APPROACHING THE TASK

		CONFEDERATE GENDER	
		Female	Male
SUBJECT GENDER	Female	3.9	5.3
	Male	4.5	3.1

* Low scores indicate high reported self-confidence

TABLE 3

CELL MEANS FOR SUBJECTS' ARGUMENTS REFERRING TO THE PATIENT'S SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

		CONFEDERATE GENDER	
		Female	Male
SUBJECT GENDER	Female	5.3	4.0
	Male	4.6	2.7

Notes

[1]See Patricia Hayes Bradley, "Power, Status, and Upward Communication in Small Decision-Making Groups," Communication Monographs, 45 (1978), 33-43.

[2]Harold H. Kelley, "Communication in Experimentally Created Hierarchies," Human Relations, 4 (1951), 39-56.

[3]Arthur R. Cohen, "Upward Communication in Experimentally Created Hierarchies," Human Relations, 11 (1958), 41-53.

[4]Alvin Zander, Arthur R. Cohen, and Ezra Stotland, Role Relation in the Mental Health Profession (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1957).

[5]William H. Read, "Upward Communication in Industrial Hierarchies," Human Relations, 15 (1962), 3-15.

[6]Read, pp. 4-12; Karlene H. Roberts and Charles A. O'Reilly, III, "Failures in Upward Communication: Three Possible Culprits," Academy of Management Journal, 17 (1974), 205-215; Fredric M. Jablin, "Superior-Subordinate Communication: The State of the Art," Psychological Bulletin, 86 (1979), 1201-1222; and Janet H. Gaines, "Upward Communication in Industry: An Experiment," Human Relations, 33 (1980), 929-42.

[7]John C. Athanassiades, "The Distortion of Upward Communication in Hierarchical Organizations," Academy of Management Journal, 16 (1973), 207-226.

[8]Dale A. Level, Jr., "Accuracy of Information Flows within the Superior/Subordinate Relationship," The Journal of Business Communication, 15 (1978), 13-22.

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[9]See John C. Athanassiades, "An Investigation of Some Communication Patterns of Female Subordinates in Hierarchical Organizations," Human Relations, 27 (1974), 195-209. This study does focus on the impact of gender in upward-directed messages, but the results are dated and based on a self-report questionnaire rather than on observed communication behavior.

[10]Fritz Heider, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations (New York: Wiley, 1958).

[11]Kay Deaux and Tim Emswiller, "Explanations of Successful Performance in Sex-Linked Tasks: What Is Skill for the Male is Luck for the Female," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 29 (1974), 80-85.

[12]Margaret Hennig and Anne Jardin, The Managerial Woman (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1977).

[13]Norman T. Feather and J.G. Simon, "Reactions to Male and Female Success and Failure in Sex-linked Occupations: Impressions of Personality, Causal Attributions, and Perceived Likelihood of Different Consequences," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31 (1975), 20-31.

[14]Deaux and Emswiller.

[15]Shirley Feldman-Summers and Sara Kiesler, "Those Who Are Number Two Try Harder: The Effect of Sex on Attribution of Causality," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 30 (1974), 846-844.

[16]Ester S. Battle, "Motivational Determinants of Academic Task Persistence," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2 (1965), 209-218.

[17]Norman T. Feather, "Attribution of Responsibility and Valence of Success and Failure in Relation to Initial Confidence and Task Performance," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 13 (1969), 129-144.

[18]James C. Diggory, Self-Evaluation: Concepts and Studies (New York: Wiley, 1966); B.B. Tyler, "Expectancy of Eventual Success as a Factor in Problem-Solving Behavior," Journal of Educational Psychology, 49 (1958), 166-172.

[19]Ellen Lenney, "Women's Self-Confidence in Achievement Settings," Psychological Bulletin, 84 (1977), 1-13.

[20]B. Weiner et al., Perceiving the Causes of Success and Failure (New York: General Learning Press Module, 1971).

[21]See, for example, William C. House and Violet Perney, "Valence of Expected and Unexpected Outcomes as a Function of Locus of Control and Type of Expectancy," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 29 (1974), 454-463; Feather and Simon; and Feldman-Summers and Kiesler.

[22]See studies discussed in Kay Deaux, The Behavior of Women and Men (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 36-44.

[23]Patricia Hayes Andrews, "Performance-Self-Esteem and Perceptions Leadership Emergence: A Comparative Study of Men and Women," Western Journal of Speech Communication, 48 (Winter, 1984), 1-13.

[24]Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 24-105.

[25]See, for example, Richard L. Johannesen, "Perspectives on Ethics in Persuasion," in Persuasion: Perception and Responsibility, ed. Carl Larson (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1973).

[26]Gilligan.

[27]See John K. Brilhart, Effective Group Discussion, 3rd ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers, 1978).

[28]Although the confederates were given criteria for judging the quality of the subjects' arguments, and this in turn was to represent the basis for awarding subjects appropriate rewards, the actual amount of money given to each subject did not influence any of the dependent variables since

subjects had completed all scales before being informed of the amount they were to receive.

[29]C. Mitchell Dayton, The Design of Educational Experiments (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970).

[30]The over-all mean for women's reported self-confidnece was 4.6, suggesting only slightly negative neutrality.

[31]See Deaux.

[32]See Deaux and Emswiller, Feldman-Summers and Kiesler, and Patricia J. Guinan, "A Comparative Study of Goal Orientation Between Male and Female Academicians" Thesis Indiana University, 1983.

[33]Deaux.

[34]See, for example, Diane N. Ruble and Thomas L. Ruble, "Sex Stereotyping," in In the Eye of the Beholder: Contemporary Issues in Stereotyping, ed. A.G. Miller (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), pp. 1-105; Virginia Schein, "The Relationship Between Sex Role Stereotypes and Requisite Management Characteristics," Journal of Applied Psychology, 57 (1973), 95-100.

[35]Gilligan, p. 44.

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